

Religions and Cultures for Peace and Harmony

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Samuel P. Huntington in his monumental classic, 'The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order' opined that the type of conflicts we would witness in the twenty first century would be a clash of civilizations. He argued that Western Christian cultures are threatened by Islamic and Confucian ones and saw culture as an independent variable with potential to stir conflicts. According to him the most important determinant of world politics in the twenty first century is the rootedness in civilizations, with religion or cosmology on which it is based being the pivotal characteristic of each civilization.¹

Consequently, according to a general consensus emerging, a long-term strategy to achieve peace should be undertaken at the level of culture and religion.

Culture may be defined² as the particular way in which persons and peoples cultivate their relationship with nature, themselves, their brothers and sisters and with God, so as to attain a fully human existence.³ It must also certainly be admitted that while man always exists in a particular culture, man is not exhaustively defined by that same culture. Moreover, the very progress of cultures demonstrates that there is something in man which transcends those cultures. This 'something' is precisely human nature.⁴ Nature itself is the measure of culture and the condition of ensuring that the person does not become prisoner of any culture, but asserts his personal dignity by living in accordance with the profound truth of his being.

Now cultures, as well as our religious beliefs and practices are learned through a process of socialization. Consequently, for a "culture of peace" to take shape peace values need to be embedded in the very organizational structures of society. Furthermore, for a "culture of peace" to exist at the level of the world,⁵ peace-related meanings and values need to be widely shared by the world's diverse cultures.

In all known historical cultures, religion is the essential element of culture, indeed it is its determining core.⁶ It is religion which determines the structure of values and thereby forms its inner logic.⁷ Now although the scriptures of most world religions speak of peace, a lot of violence is still committed in the name of religion.⁸

However, at the same time it is also widely recognized that the diffusion of religious values can positively transform society, polity and culture is also widely recognized. The European Council of Religious Leaders, one of four regional Inter- Religious Councils (IRCs) within the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) network,

in its final declaration at Lille, France, on 27 May, 2009, emphasized the role of Religions in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace.⁹ It highlighted four dimensions of religions that would help foster a culture of peace.

- i) The spiritual dimension of religions: Religions cultivate the human spirit through spiritual practices that aim at the realization of genuine peace both within each believer and in the wider human family. Its power can show itself in the ability to bear the unbearable, find hope where there appear to be no grounds for hope and in forgiving the unforgivable. It is also manifest in celebration of beauty and cultivation of virtue.
- ii) The ethical dimension of religions: From the spiritual depths of religions spring ethical systems which guide the lives of millions. Religious leaders at all levels can speak with moral authority on values that are deeply held and widely shared by most religious traditions and which correspond to the values in a culture of peace. Among these are respect for the inviolable dignity of each person, striving for justice, compassion for the afflicted, care for the earth and its creatures, and commitment to non-violence.
- iii) The social dimension of religions: Religious traditions have vertical and horizontal structures that give them unique channels for influence and exchange of ideas and insights. In every town and village there is a place where people gather for worship: a church, a mosque, a synagogue, a temple or a gurudwara. Through varying types of networks these are linked to similar places in other locations, and to national and international bodies, thus allowing the interests of men and women everywhere to be heard by national and international leaders, and national and international insights to be disseminated to the local level. All religious traditions emphasize the importance of education, instruction and formation of children and young people. This social dimension of religions provides great potential for communication and thereby furthering a culture of peace.
- iv) The cultural dimension of religions: All religions relate to culture and can contribute to building traditions that support peace by interpreting sacred texts and traditions and applying them under changing circumstances. Thus they bind together the lives of past, present and future generations. Explicitly and implicitly religions tell and retell stories which form the identity of the faithful and define their relationships to others. Religious narratives have the power to confirm and to challenge the present order of things.

Emphasizing that faith is always lived within a culture, Pope Benedict XVI in his address at the Meeting with Organizations for Interreligious Dialogue in Jerusalem, May 11, 2009¹⁰ declared the history of religion also shows that a community of believers proceeds by degrees of faithfulness to God, drawing from and shaping

the culture it meets. Today the encounter of religions with culture occurs not simply on a geographical plane. Certain aspects of globalization and, in particular, the world of the internet have created a vast virtual culture, the worth of which is as varied as its countless manifestations. Undoubtedly much has been achieved to create a sense of closeness and unity within the world-wide human family. Yet, at the same time, the boundless array of portals through which people so readily access undifferentiated sources of information can easily become an instrument of increasing fragmentation: the unity of knowledge is shattered and the complex skills of critique, discernment and discrimination learned through academic and ethical traditions are at times bypassed or neglected.

The question naturally arises then as to what contribution religion makes to the cultures of the world against the backdrop of rapid globalization. Since many are quick to point out the readily apparent differences between religions, as believers or religious persons we are presented with the challenge to proclaim with clarity what we share in common.

Now every culture with its inner capacity to give and receive gives expression to the one human nature. Yet, the individual is never fully expressed through his or her own culture, but transcends it in the constant search for something beyond. From this perspective, we see the possibility of a unity which is not dependent upon uniformity. While the differences we explore in inter-religious dialogue may at times appear as barriers, they need not overshadow the common sense of awe and respect for the universal, for the absolute and for truth, which impel religious peoples to converse with one another in the first place. Indeed it is the shared conviction that these transcendent realities have their source in – and bear traces of – the Almighty that believers uphold before each other, as well as our organizations, our society, and our world. In this way not only do we enrich culture but we shape it. Consequently, our lives of religious fidelity echo God's irruptive presence and so form a culture not defined by boundaries of time or place but fundamentally shaped by the principles and actions that stem from belief.

Indeed, religious belief presupposes truth and the one who believes is the one who seeks truth and lives by it. Although the medium by which we understand the discovery and communication of truth differs in part from religion to religion, we should not be deterred in our efforts to bear witness to truth's power. Together we can proclaim that God exists and can be known, that the earth is his creation, that we are his creatures, and that he calls every man and woman to a way of life that respects his design for the world. If we believe we have a criterion of judgment and discernment which is divine in origin and intended for all humanity, then we cannot tire of bringing that knowledge to bear on civic life. Truth should be offered to all; it serves all members of society. It sheds light on the foundation of morality and ethics, and suffuses reason with the strength to reach beyond its own

limitations in order to give expression to our deepest common aspirations.¹¹ Far from threatening the tolerance of differences or cultural plurality, truth makes consensus possible and keeps public debate rational, honest and accountable, and opens the gateway to peace. Fostering the will to be obedient to the truth, in fact, makes possible the genuine dialogue of cultures and religions so urgently needed today.

It is in this perspective that we realize that religion is closely linked to culture and is a vital source for fostering a culture of peace. The concept of a holistic culture of peace represents a shift from the secular towards the spiritual peace paradigms, a realization that inner peace and outer peace - spiritual and material - are interconnected and interdependent. It is here that the contributions of the world's religious and spiritual traditions can contribute to our understanding.

For instance, "if one tries to achieve outer peace in the world only, but does not deal with inner peace, then one's inner conflicts can be projected out onto the world, making it difficult to achieve outer peace - the supposed goal. Likewise, if one tries to achieve inner peace only, but does not pay attention to creating outer peace in the world, then the social injustices and structural violence in the world will make it more difficult for most people experiencing those conditions to be able to find inner peace - the supposed goal. Thus the achievement of either inner or outer peace helps create the conditions necessary for the creation of the other type of peace."¹²

Indeed, Mahatma Gandhi's greatness lies in bringing together and harmonizing the two apparently incongruous ideas of non-violence which preaches world peace and brotherhood and political movements which revel in the polemics of difference and antagonism.¹³

As a consequence in the world political scene he retrieved non-violence as a powerful political tool, and promulgated the theory that political goal is ultimately a manifestation of a higher spiritual and humanitarian goal, which eventually culminates in world peace!

Being a deeply religious person he saw the different religions as paths to the same goal. His philosophy was rooted in the Indian religions of Jainism and Buddhism. Both of these advocate ahimsa (non-violence), which is "absence of the desire to kill or harm". From Hinduism, in particular from the Bhagwad Gita, he took the importance of action in one's life without concern for success. He was inspired by the teachings of Jesus, specially the emphasis on love for everyone, even one's enemies, and the need to strive for justice. Gandhi harmonized these theological perspectives as he searched for a meaningful life. It was this outlook that Gandhi employed as an instrument to guide India's freedom struggle, which eventually succeeded to unite the length and breadth of the country like never before.

Given the cultural and religious diversity of the world, unless we recognize pluralism and respect diversity, peace may be beyond reach. Religions should help cultures uncover their more fundamental and humane aspects. Often the secularist humane project finds itself lacking due to its inability to go deeper and touch the inner depths of a person's life. It is this gap that religion should fill. This calls for a strategy of religious social engagement, a redefinition of the role of religion and a deployment of its spiritual and material resources for the cause of peace.¹⁴ The Meeting of 'The Contribution by Religions to the Culture of Peace', organized by UNESCO in Barcelona from 12 to 18 December 1994, declared: "Grounded in our faith, we will build a culture of peace based on non-violence, tolerance, dialogue, mutual understanding, and justice. We call upon the institutions of our civil society, the United Nations system, governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations, corporations, and the mass media, to strengthen their commitments to peace and to listen to the cries of the victims and the dispossessed. We call upon the different religious and cultural traditions to join hands together in this effort, and to cooperate with us in spreading the message of peace."

"Our duty before God", as Pope Benedict XVI declared, "is expressed not only in our worship but also in our love and concern for society, for culture, for our world and for all who live in this land. Some would have us believe that our differences are necessarily a cause of division and thus at most to be tolerated. A few even maintain that our voices should simply be silenced. But we know that our differences need never be misrepresented as an inevitable source of friction or tension either between ourselves or in society at large. Rather, they provide a wonderful opportunity for people of different religions to live together in profound respect, esteem and appreciation, encouraging one another in the ways of God".¹⁵

All over the world there are spiritually based groups belonging to the world's religious traditions who are working for peace. Groups like Pax Christi or the Buddhist Peace Fellowship draw their inspiration for peace work from the Christian and Buddhist religious traditions respectively.¹⁶

However, there are also interdenominational and interreligious peace organizations like the International Fellowship of Reconciliation which works across religious traditions. In both cases, non-violent religious groups base their work for peace on spiritual principles. Religion served as a major force in the struggle against totalitarianism and injustice as evidenced from the experience of countries like Iran, Poland, Philippines and East Timor. Much attention is given in peace research to the role of religions and religious groups in conflict, particularly ethnic conflict where leaders from different religious backgrounds often use religion as a basis for war. However, far less attention has been given to the moderating influence of religions and religious peace groups in controlling war.

Now the Bible understands peace not merely as the absence of war or strife, but positively as a state of harmony and well-being that comes as a blessing from God, which we receive when our relationships with God, our neighbour, ourselves and creation are in order.¹⁷ It is also conceived as a goal we need to strive for together. At the heart of Jesus' revelation, was that God is 'Abba', 'loving Father'.¹⁸ It follows, consequently, that as children of a loving Father, we are all brothers and sisters. Hence, it follows that we need to live in peace and harmony and share the fruits of the earth with one another. The central proclamation made by Jesus concerned the arrival of the Reign of God,¹⁹ which was not identified with any place or territory, but, in the light of the Gospel, is presented as a concrete experience of living by the values of the Gospel, viz. forgiveness, humility, service, love, selflessness, and so on.²⁰

The United Nations has declared January 1 as the World Day of Peace every year. Way back in 1972, Pope Paul VI, in the course of his message for the World Day of Peace declared, "If you want peace, work for justice."²¹ In 2003, on the occasion of his message for the World Day of Peace, Pope John Paul II reiterated the same message in the context of the new threat of terrorism.²² He pointed out that the scourge of terrorism has grown more virulent in recent years, producing brutal massacres, as well as putting obstacles in the way of dialogue and negotiations. While acknowledging the use of punitive measures to redress the situation, the Holy Father was quick to add that these efforts need to be accompanied by a courageous and lucid analysis of the reason behind the terrorist attacks. Consequently, at both the educational as well as at the political levels, we need to recognize and eliminate the underlying causes and situations of injustice which drive people to more desperate and violent acts. This also implies that we seek to inculcate in people a deep respect for human life.

In his message for the World Day of Peace this year, 2009,²³ Pope Benedict XVI quoted Pope John Paul II who had declared in 1993, "Our world shows increasing evidence of another grave threat to peace with many individuals and indeed whole peoples are living today in conditions of extreme poverty. The gap between rich and poor has become more marked, even in the most economically developed nations. This is a problem which the conscience of humanity cannot ignore, since the conditions in which a great number of people are living are an insult to their innate dignity and as a result are a threat to the authentic and harmonious progress of the world community."

In this context, Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that fighting poverty requires attentive consideration of the complex phenomenon of globalization.²⁴ However, given the fact that globalization is ambivalent, it therefore needs to be managed with great prudence. This will include giving priority to the needs of the world's

poor, and overcoming the scandal of the imbalance, which lies in the social, cultural, political and economic orders.

Pope John Paul II, in this context, with reference to the Asian nations declared, that, "they are unable to hold their own in a global market economy. And perhaps more significantly, there is also the aspect of a cultural globalization, made possible by the modern communications media, which is quickly drawing Asian societies into a global consumer culture that is both secularist and materialistic. The result is an eroding of traditional family and social values which until now had sustained peoples and societies. All of this makes it clear that *the ethical and moral aspects of globalization* need to be more directly addressed by the leaders of nations and by organizations concerned with human promotion. The Church insists upon the need for "globalization without marginalization".²⁵

The root causes for this situation declares Pope Benedict XVI lie not only in the unjust structures of society, but in the structures in the heart.²⁶ He points out that while we often tend to highlight the superficial and instrumental causes of poverty, we need to attend to those harboured within the human heart, for instance, the reality of greed and a narrow vision. Also the problems of development, aid and international cooperation are sometimes addressed without any real attention to the human element, but as merely technical questions – and so limited to establishing structures, setting up trade agreements, and allocating funding impersonally. In fact, the fight against poverty really needs men and women who live in a profoundly fraternal way and are able to accompany individuals, families and communities on journeys to authentic human development.

Consequently, a "common code of ethics" declared Pope Benedict XVI²⁷, consequently is the need of the hour. This would consist of norms based not upon mere consensus, but rooted in the natural law inscribed by the Creator on the conscience of every human being.²⁸ The Holy Father pertinently asks, "Does not every one of us sense deep within his or her conscience a call to make a personal contribution to the common good and to peace in society?" Indeed, effective means to redress the marginalization of the world's poor through globalization will only be found if people everywhere feel personally outraged by the injustices in the world and by the concomitant violations of human rights. And so the Church, which is the "sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race"²⁹ needs in the first place to put into practice what she stands for, while at the same time strive to make her concrete contribution to eliminate injustice and establish, instead, a world of greater peace and solidarity.

Indeed, we cannot live insulated or isolated lives precisely because we are 'part of the mainland.' We need to live in solidarity because "God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favoring anyone. This is the foundation of the universal destination of the earth's

goods." We are living in a fast shrinking world, a world that has already become a global village. Indeed, the Church desires "...a globalization which will be at the service of the whole person and of all people." At the mere touch of a keyboard we can see for ourselves the event that is taking place hundreds of miles away. Information technology spans all distance and bridges every gap. Solidarity is thus easily within our reach!³⁰

And finally, for the establishment of a lasting peace in the world, justice must find its fulfillment in love. Justice must be complemented and completed by love. For this reason, forgiveness is needed to resolve the problems of both individuals and nations. There can be no true peace and harmony without forgiveness. Pope John Paul II in his message for the celebration of the world day of Peace on January 1, 2004³¹ consequently declared, "for the establishment of true peace in the world, *justice must find its fulfilment in charity*. Certainly law is the first road leading to peace, and people need to be taught to respect that law. Yet one does not arrive at the end of this road unless justice is complemented by love. Justice and love sometimes appear to be *opposing forces*. In fact they are but *two faces of a single reality*, two dimensions of human life needing to be mutually integrated. Historical experience shows this to be true. It shows how justice is frequently unable to free itself from rancour, hatred and even cruelty. *By itself, justice is not enough*. Indeed, it can even betray itself, unless it is open to that deeper power which is love."

Our prayer for peace and harmony will thus be a prayer for justice, i.e. a right-ordering of relations within and among peoples and nations. Our prayer for peace will also imply seeking God's forgiveness, and imploring him to bless us with the courage to forgive those who have trespassed against us. For in the ultimate analysis, God, who we believe, entered human history in Christ Jesus awaits our loving response. For only where a 'civilization of love' reigns³² can an authentic and a lasting peace and harmony will prevail.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon and Schuster, London, 1997 as quoted by M. S. John, "Religion and the Culture of Peace", in *Jeevadhara*, Vol XXXI, July-September, 2001, p. 366
- 2 Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, No. 2 at www.catholicculture.org/library/, accessed 12/09/2009
- 3 GS, 53
- 4 *Veritatis splendor*, 53
- 5 "Lille Declaration on a Culture of Peace", of the European Council of Religious Leaders - Religions for Peace (27 May, 2009), at www.rfp-europe.eu/index.cfm?id=241887, accessed 12/09/2009. *The European Council of Religious Leaders is one of four regional Inter-Religious Councils (IRCs) within the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) network.* The European Council of Religious Leaders brings together senior religious leaders from Europe's historical religions: Judaism,

Christianity and Islam, with Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Zoroastrians as active participants. The Council, which has 30 members, was founded in Oslo in 2002. The Council is funded by its members and has received project support from The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Religions for Peace (WCRP)* is a network of national and regional Inter-Religious Councils (IRC) connected through an international World Council and Secretariat, based opposite the UN Headquarters in New York. The global organisation brings together 51 national and 4 regional *IRCs*. Through these *IRCs* Mosques, Synagogues, Churches, Temples and Gudwaras form a network that enables them to mobilise and use their shared potential as religious communities for Reconciliation and Peace.

- 6 *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 45: "Culture is broader than religion. Religion can be said to represent the transcendent dimension of culture and in a certain way its soul."
- 7 (Cardinal) J. Ratzinger, "Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures", in www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZHONG.HTM, accessed 12/09/2009
- 8 Mark Jurgensmeyer (2000), *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkley, Ca: University of California Press, p. 95, quoted by M. S. John, "Religion and the Culture of Peace", in *Jeevadhara*, Vol XXXI, July-September, 2001, p. 369
- 9 "Lille Declaration on a Culture of Peace, of the European Council of Religious Leaders - Religions for Peace" (27 May, 2009), at www.rfp-europe.eu/index.cfm?id=241887, accessed 12/09/2009.
- 10 Cf. Benedict XVI, "Address at Meeting with Organizations for Interreligious Dialogue in Jerusalem", May 11, 2009, Copyright 2009 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana at www.catholicculture.org/library/ - Cached, accessed 12/09/2009
- 11 In fact, Pope Benedict XVI pertinently points out that, "The greatest service to development, then, is a Christian humanism that enkindles charity and takes its lead from truth, accepting both as a lasting gift from God. Openness to God makes us open towards our brothers and sisters and towards an understanding of life as a joyful task to be accomplished in a spirit of solidarity." (*Caritas in Veritate*, 78)
- 12 Linda Groff and Paul Smoker, "Creating Global-Local Cultures of Peace", in <http://www.gmu.edu/academics/pcs/smoker.htm>, quoted by M. S. John, "Religion and the Culture of Peace", in *Jeevadhara*, Vol XXXI, July-September, 2001, p. 375. www.mkgandhi.org/nonviolence/gandhi_and_non.htm, accessed 12/09/2009
- 13 Sheth, N., 'The Non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi', in *Jnanadeepa*, Vol 4 (2001), 59-78. Anon, "Gandhi's Non-Violence" in socialchangenow.ca/mypages/gandhi.htm; (Dr.) C. Sheela Reddy, "Gandhi and Satyagraha - Validity and Relevance", in www.satyagraha.org.za/.../index.php?...satyagraha...relevance, accessed 12/09/2009; Gandhi Smriti, "Gandhi and Non-Violence" in www.mapsofindia.com/personalities/gandhi/non-violence.html; Joseph, F. B., "The Much Misunderstood Gandhian Concepts of Satyagraha and Ahimsa", in *Word and Worship*, Vol 30 (1997) 212-218; Nanda, B. R., "Gandhi and Non-Violence - Gandhi".
- 14 Cf. M. S. John, "Religion and the Culture of Peace", in *Jeevadhara*, p. 377
- 15 Benedict XVI, "Address at Meeting with Organizations for Interreligious Dialogue in Jerusalem", May 11, 2009, Copyright 2009 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana at www.catholicculture.org/library/ - Cached, accessed 12/09/2009; Pope Benedict XVI pertinently reminds us in *Deus Caritas est*, 33 that, "the personnel who carry out the Church's charitable activity on the practical level,...they must not be moved by

Christ's love, persons whose hearts Christ has conquered with his love, awakening within them a love of neighbour."

- 16 Cf. M. S. John, "Religion and the Culture of Peace", in *Jeevadhara*, p. 371
- 17 Cf. C. Stuhlmueeller, C. P., (Ed.) "Peace", in *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, T. P. I., Bangalore, 2005, pp. 709-714
- 18 Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Doubleday, New York, 2007, pp. 135-141
- 19 Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 46-63
- 20 Benedict XVI, *Spes salvi*, 31
- 21 Paul VI, *Message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI for the Celebration of the [World] Day of Peace, January 1, 1972*, at www.usccb.org/laity/bonds.shtml, accessed 12/09/2009
- 22 John Paul II, *Message on the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2003*, at www.vatican.va/.../john_paul_ii/messages/peace/.../hf_jp-ii_mes_20021217_xxxvi-world-day-for-peace_en.html, accessed 12/09/2009
- 23 Benedict XVI, *Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2009*, No. 1 at www.vatican.va/.../benedict_xvi/messages/peace/.../hf_ben-xvi_mes_20081208_xlii-world-day-peace_en.html, accessed 12/09/2009
- 24 Benedict XVI, *Message for the World Day of Peace, 2009*, No. 13
- 25 John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 39
- 26 Benedict XVI, *Message for the World Day of Peace, 2009*, No. 13
- 27 Benedict XVI, *Message for the World Day of Peace, 2009*, No. 14
- 28 Cf. Rom 2, 14-15
- 29 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 775 at www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/p123a9p1.htm, accessed on 12/09/2009
- 30 Cardinal Paul Poupard, "The Foundational Moral Imperatives of Our Times" (This is part of a series of essays published by the Caux Round Table, an organization of business leaders dedicated to shaping a moral capitalism) at www.helleniccomserve.com/poupard.html, accessed 12/09/2009
- 31 John Paul II, *Message World Day of Peace, 2004*, No. 3, at www.vatican.va/.../john_paul_ii/messages/peace/.../hf_jp-ii_mes_20031216_xxxvii-world-day-for-peace_en.html, accessed 12/09/2009
- 32 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, No 582, at www.vatican.va/.../rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AG = "Ad Gentes Divinitus", Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, Vatican II, 1965.
 CV = "Caritate in Veritatis", Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI on Integral Human Development in charity and truth, 2009
 DCE= "Deus caritas est", Encyclical Letter of Benedict XVI on Christian Love, 2005
 EA = "Ecclesia in Asia", Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II on Jesus Christ the Saviour and his Mission of Love and Service in Asia, 1999
 EN = "Evangelii Nuntiandi", Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI on the Evangelization in the Modern World, 1975

- GS = "Gaudium et spes", Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican II 1965
- LG = "Lumen Gentium", Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican II 1965
- NA = "Nostra Aetate", Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions, Vatican II, 1965
- RM = "Redemptoris Missio", Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II on the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate, 1990
- SS = "Spes salvi", Encyclical Letter of Benedict XVI on Christian Hope, 2007
- TMA= "Tertio Millennio Adveniente"(Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II on the preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000), 1994